

Thatcher Urges Lithuanian To Compromise With Soviets

By CRAIG R. WHITNEY

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LONDON, May 9 — Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher today urged moderation and compromise on the visiting Prime Minister of Lithuania, the Baltic republic that proclaimed independence from the Soviet Union two months ago.

Mrs. Thatcher's aides said that she had been encouraged by the hour-and-20-minute meeting she held at 10 Downing Street this morning with the Lithuanian Prime Minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene, and that she would send a message to President Mikhail S. Gorbachev of the Soviet Union reporting on the conversation. The Soviet leader has imposed a partial economic blockade on Lithuania and demanded that it rescind its declaration of independence, made March 11.

Mrs. Prunskiene said Mrs. Thatcher had "absolutely, unquestionably" supported independence for the break-away republic. "I expressed the hope that she would not stand on the sidelines but would use her good relations with Mr. Gorbachev," she said.

But a British official said Mrs. Thatcher had told Mrs. Prunskiene that while Britain had never recognized the Soviet annexation of Lithuania in 1940 and sympathized with its desire for independence now, she favored a compromise solution that would preserve the gains of East-West relations brought about by Mr. Gorbachev's policies.

Oil Stocks Running Low

"The two Prime Ministers left the meeting this morning saying that they saw absolutely eye to eye on these issues," William Waldegrave, a minister of state in the Foreign Office, said later in the House of Commons. "Both agreed that there is no reality of progress without a diplomatic and negotiating process being developed," he said.

Mrs. Prunskiene said at a news conference today that Lithuania would run out of some grades of oil by May 25 if the blockade continued, but that there was still plenty of food. Lithuania would not withdraw its declaration of independence, she said, but was ready to suspend some of the measures passed since March.

Mrs. Thatcher's attitude encouraging dialogue and compromise is part of

a coordinated NATO approach. President Bush saw Mrs. Prunskiene in Washington last week, and President François Mitterrand of France and Chancellor Helmut Kohl of West Germany jointly urged Lithuania last month to suspend some of the actions taken since independence.

Mrs. Prunskiene, who also met today with leaders of the opposition Labor and Liberal Democrat parties in the House of Commons, told reporters after her meeting with Mrs. Thatcher that she had been "very pleased" with their talk.

'Foot-Dragging' by Soviets

British officials said Mrs. Thatcher was concerned that Mr. Gorbachev was coming under increasing pressure from the Soviet military to crack down in Lithuania, and that he had stiffened

Thatcher wants East-West gains preserved.

Soviet positions in arms control talks with the United States and the NATO alliance.

In Brussels last Thursday, NATO's Secretary General, Manfred Wörner, noting that the Vienna negotiations on reductions in conventional forces in Europe had slowed down in recent months, said there had been "foot-dragging" by the Soviet Union. The British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, also said in Brussels that there were fears that the Soviet Union was "moving rapidly toward a state of confusion."

Mrs. Thatcher has often urged her partners in the European Community to be cautious and avoid making statements about Lithuania or other matters that would jeopardize Mr. Gorbachev's position. "I don't think the Prime Minister has lost faith that he'll get through," one of her aides said today. "She thinks he's a most resourceful politician, and perhaps thinks he has to be."